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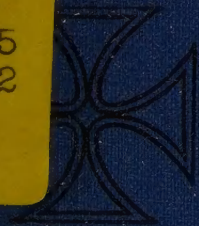
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NEW TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES.

SECOND SERIES

RIGHT REV. A. F. W. INGRAM.
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NEW TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES

(SECOND SERIES),

HISTORICAL AND SCIENTIFIC.

BY THE RIGHT REV.

A. F. WINNINGTON INGRAM, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

—♦—
PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE TRACT COMMITTEE.

—♦—
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INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.¹

SECULARISM AMONG WORKING MEN.

IT is a popular mistake to suppose that working men have no sense of religion; anyone who lives long enough among them will acknowledge that, even among those who never go to any place of worship at all, the religious instinct is alive, and sometimes even strong.

Why then do the Secularists find, as they undoubtedly do, that the most promising ground for their teaching lies in the working-class quarters of our great cities? For six reasons: (1) Because working men see more of the suffering of the world than other people. Your prosperous merchant or well-to-do tradesman finds the world fairly comfortable as it is, and often considers it "the best of all possible worlds;" but the working man sees the other side; far the most effective speeches made by Secularists in Victoria Park, and the hardest to answer, are those which harp upon the string that God either cannot cure the misery there is in the world or does not care to do so; they are the only speeches which as a rule carry the audience away.

¹ Being the substance of a lecture given to the clergy assembled at Oxford for University Extension Lectures in July, 1893.

(2) The vast majority of working men go neither to church or chapel, and many never pray. The spiritual muscle, though still there, has grown weak from want of use, like any other muscle, and they have therefore no living spiritual experience to counterbalance materialistic teaching.

(3) Of history the great majority are profoundly ignorant, and are therefore at the mercy of almost any statement. Thus, in answer to a description of the state of morality in Rome eighteen centuries ago, drawn from Tacitus and Juvenal, it was replied that "Rome was really quite a moral place eighteen centuries ago, and was only blackened by the Christians to throw their religion into a brighter light." Among the audience of 1,000 working men there was not sufficient knowledge to decide which was right, and it merely became a question which speaker was most likely to be telling a lie.

(4) Intoxication at the better prospects now opening before them, chiefly connected with this world, though undoubtedly also bearing on another, makes them think little of anything not immediately bearing on "better conditions" here; parsons to them preach a great deal about another world without attending sufficiently to this.

All this is mainly due to our own fault in the past; we have not sufficiently shown the immediate bearing of belief in another world upon this, and have feared to speak out sufficiently strongly on questions like sanitation, sweating, &c. Partly, however, it is inevitable that witnesses to the

unseen and upholders of the moral law should be unpopular in exact proportion to the dislike human nature has to be bored about what it cannot see, or worried about uncomfortable details like drink and lust.

(5) All that we hear on the side of Christian evidence from our Lightfoots, Westcotts, and Salmons, is a closed book to them; when I had explained at some length one day that most New Testament difficulties arose from mistranslations or misunderstanding of the original Greek text, such as in the case of "Woman, what have I to do with thee?"¹ "Take no thought for the morrow," &c.; the only reply was this, "Do you really suppose that if the Christian religion had been meant for the world, its documents would have been *written in Greek at all?*"

(6) But far the worst obstacle is the distorted form in which the Gospel has often been presented to them. They mistake Calvinism for Christianity, and quotations from old writers long disowned by the Christian Church are constantly put before them as representing the teaching of the Church to-day.

In spite, however, of all these difficulties the prospect is very hopeful; many of the Secularists themselves are honest and kind-hearted men, and some are personal friends of mine; I have always received the most courteous reception at their stand in the Park, and have sometimes been given double time to reply; the very fact that so much of the

¹ See New Testament Difficulties (First Series).

unbelief and religious indifference is due to misunderstanding is exceedingly hopeful in itself, and as for the mass of the working men themselves, it is still considered "bad form" to be an avowed atheist; they are anxious and willing to hear the other side, and where we can make the figure of Christ clear to them through the mists of old prejudice, and what seems to them the hampering machinery of ecclesiastical institutions, they recognize Him as at any rate the best man they have ever heard of, and quite agree that if we could be all like Him the world would be a different place.

What methods, therefore, are we to adopt, before it is too late, to win our working brothers to believe in Christ as the Son of Man, and so to be led on to put their whole faith in Him as the Son of God? "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to Me." We have His promise; He is lifted up; how are we to clear away the mists that they may see Him?

Putting aside all obvious ways, simple mission services, Bible classes, missions, house to house visiting, and working men's clubs, the special question with which we are concerned now is, How are we to deal with doubts and difficulties, and meet the Secularist propaganda?

(1) *By open air lectures.*

After trying both ways, I am convinced that the best way is to have a stand of your own, instead of spending your breath in trying to answer an hour's lecture in ten minutes. It is not, as I have already said, that you will not be courteously treated on the other stand; "with what measure

ye mete, it will be measured to you again;" but it is really a question of economy of time, and it is obviously better for you to have the hour than the ten minutes, even if you are courteously given double time. What is wanted is definite teaching of facts as an antidote to vague negative statements; and that men will listen to such teaching was shown by the great crowd that stood Sunday after Sunday round the Christian stand during last summer, listening to by no means always easy teaching on such questions as "Inspiration," "Buddhism," or "Bible Difficulties."

Questions should always be invited after the lecture, and an opportunity given to anyone to reply. Curious questions will sometimes be asked, such as "Why the Bible says that Cain killed Abel with the jawbone of an ass?" "Find the place," is the reply, as the Bible is handed to the questioner. "Oh! No! that is a *Revised Version*." "But it does not say so, Sir, in the Authorized Version." "Well! then it does in the Roman Catholic Bible." It must not, however, be supposed that all questions are of this calibre; many are very intelligent, and not a few extremely difficult; the only secret of success in dealing with them is the obvious secret—be honest and good-tempered. If you don't know a thing, say you don't; and if you can't keep your temper, don't go in for open air work at all. It is not easy always to do so; but surely we may rely in such work (otherwise none of us would dare to undertake it) on God's grace.

(2) A far quieter but more permanently effectual

method is in Sunday afternoon lectures, followed by discussion, such as take place every Sunday during the autumn and winter in the Oxford House lecture hall.

The method is very similar to that employed in the open air: lecture, questions, discussion; the only rules: (1) courtesy, (2) relevancy, (3) brevity. The advantage is that, all being seated, it is possible to go into a question more thoroughly, and the audience, which is mainly the same, Sunday after Sunday, can follow on, point by point, different branches of the same subject. It is a good thing to have a lending library in connection with the lecture hall, as we have at the Oxford House.

Such questions as, Is prayer reasonable? How we got our Bible? Why am I a Churchman? may be usefully discussed in it. The questions often take the form of "What would you say, if such and such was said to you?" and such afternoon discussions put answers in the mouths of those Christians who have such hard battles to fight in the workshops and factories of our large towns.

In the Appendix a list of the subjects discussed in this way during 1891 and 1892 is given, in case those inclined to start such lectures might find such a list useful.

(3) The third method seems to be *cheap literature*. We must translate our commentaries and treatises into language understood of the people. Only so can the knowledge contained in them filter down to be an antidote to false teaching, and to enable those who do believe to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

It was as an effort in this direction that this series of papers and those already published were written. I am thoroughly conscious of their imperfections, and only issue them as a suggestion of how the same thing might be better done. That working men will buy such tracts or books on subjects on which their interest is stirred, may be shown by the fact that after a lecture in the summer of 1893 on "New Testament Difficulties," fifty copies of the first series of "New Testament Difficulties" were sold to the audience in three minutes at sixpence a copy.

What I feel strongly is this, that much more might be done, if more could find time to help. We might, all over the country, working together, completely roll back the rather shallow tide of secularism and unbelief.

Already working men are finding out that "parsons" take more interest in social questions than they used to do, and, to use their own language, "are not such bad chaps when you get to know them;" they instinctively feel that men who at any rate have most of them a University education, are bound to know something about these vexed questions of evidence and criticism. Moreover, our lay brethren who are Christians would not surely leave us to work alone. All we have to do is to be brave, resolute, candid, courteous, and clear to win the day.

A. F. W. I.

OXFORD HOUSE,
BETHNAL GREEN,
January, 1894.

NEW TESTAMENT DIFFICULTIES

(SECOND SERIES),

HISTORICAL AND SCIENTIFIC.

PART I.

WE are encouraged in beginning a new series of explanations of popular difficulties with regard to the New Testament by the number of letters from very different quarters, spontaneously written, and thanking us for the first series of papers, which seem to have been found useful in spite of their extreme simplicity.

THE YEAR OF CHRIST'S BIRTH.

This must be ascertained by historical and chronological research, since there is no certain and harmonious tradition on the subject. Our Christian era, which was introduced by the Roman Abbot Dionysius Exiguus in the sixth century, and came into general use two centuries later, during the reign of Charlemagne, puts the Nativity on December 25th, 754 Anno Urbis, that is, after the founding of the city of Rome. Nearly all chronologists agree that this is wrong by at least four years. Christ was born A.U. 750 (or B.C. 4), if not earlier.

THE DAY OF THE NATIVITY.

The only indications of the season of our Saviour's birth is the fact that the shepherds were watching their flocks in the fields at that time, which, so far as it goes, points to any other season rather than winter, but it is not decisive against the traditional date, for a succession of bright days in December and January is of frequent occurrence in the East, as in western countries, and an experienced traveller in the Holy Land says that the weather about Christmas is favourable to the feeding of flocks, and often most beautiful.

The ancient tradition varied down to the fourth century, when the Christmas festival, on December 25th, was introduced first in Rome (before A.D. 360) on the basis of several Roman Festivals, the Saturnalia or *Dies Natalis Invicti Solis*, in honour of the sun, who in the winter solstice is, as it were, born anew, and begins his conquering march. This phenomenon in nature was regarded as an appropriate symbol of the appearance of the Son of Righteousness dispelling the long night of sin and error.

The 6th of January has in its favour an older tradition, and is sustained by Eusebius. It was celebrated in the East from the third century as the Feast of Epiphany, in commemoration of the Nativity as well as of Christ's Baptism, and afterwards of His manifestation to the Gentiles. The real facts which help to fix the date of Christ's birth are the following.

THE DEATH OF HEROD.

According to Matt. ii. 1, Christ was born "in the days of Herod the king," that is, Herod the Great, who died, according to Josephus, at Jericho A.U. 750, just before the Passover, being nearly seventy years of age, after a reign of thirty-seven years. This date has been verified by the astronomical calculations of the eclipse of the moon, which took place March 13th, A.U. 750, a few days before Herod's death. Allowing two months or more for the events between the birth of Christ and the murder of the Innocents by Herod, the Nativity must be put back at least to February or January A.U. 750, which would be B.C. 4 according to our reckoning.

THE MURDER OF THE INNOCENTS.

Much has been made of this event not having been mentioned by Josephus, and it has been spoken of as though many thousands of infants perished, but the fact of the matter is that the murder of one or two dozen infants—for that is all there could have been in so little a village—was a very small incident among the many murders perpetrated by Herod. He had murdered Hyrcanus, the grandfather of his favourite wife Mariamne, then Mariamne herself, then her two sons, Alexander and Aristobulus, and only five days before his death, his eldest son, Antipater, and actually left orders that all the nobles assembled round him in his last moments should

be executed after his death, so that at least his death might be attended by universal mourning.

The biblical account fits in therefore with the well-known cruelty of Herod. A confused remembrance of it is preserved in the anecdote related by Macrobius, that Augustus on hearing of Herod's murder of the "boys under two years, and of his own son," remarked that it "was better to be Herod's swine than his son."

It is possible that we have another chronological hint verified by astronomy.

THE STAR OF THE MAGI (Matt. ii. 4-9),

appeared before the death of Herod, and would naturally attract the attention of the astrological sages of the East in connection with the expectation of the advent of a great king among the Jews. Such a belief arose naturally from Balaam's prophecy of "the star that was to rise out of Jacob" (Numbers xxiv. 17), and from the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel, and widely prevailed in the East since the dispersion of the Jews (comp. Tacitus Hist. v. 13; Suetonius Vespasian c. 4). Providence often works through natural agencies, and that God did so in this case is made at least very possible by a remarkable discovery in astronomy.

KEPLER'S DISCOVERY.

The great and devout Kepler observed in the years 1603 and 1604 a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, which was made more rare and lu-


minous by the addition of Mars in the month of March, 1604. In the autumn of the same year he observed near them a new star of uncommon brilliancy, which seemed to him "an exceedingly wonderful work of God."

By careful calculation he ascertained that a similar phenomenon would have appeared in the sign of the Pisces repeatedly between 747 and 748 (i.e. B.C. 7 and 6). This discovery was almost forgotten till the nineteenth century, when it was confirmed by all the eminent astronomers, notably Pritchard. It certainly makes the pilgrimage of the Magi to Jerusalem and Bethlehem more intelligible, and "the star of astronomy" would thus become "a torch of chronology and an argument for the truthfulness of the first Gospel" (Ideler).

Charles Pritchard adds, "To complete the fascination of the tale, about an hour and a half after sunset, the two planets might be seen from Jerusalem, hanging as it were in the meridian, and suspended over Bethlehem in the distance. These celestial phenomena thus described are, it will be seen, beyond the reach of question."¹ Of course the star in question may have been a purely miraculous appearance, but the above facts are at least worthy of notice.

¹ The above has been abbreviated mainly from Schaff's History of the Church, vol. i., pp. 111-119.

PART II.

HESE papers were originally published separately month by month, and after the issue of the first paper we received from a critic, as courteous as he is frank, some comments upon it, and it will be only what courtesy demands on our part to answer his objections before going on to any further questions. First, then,

HOW COULD THE STAR "GO BEFORE" THE
WISE MEN AND "STAND OVER" BETH-
LEHEM?

We have always taken these expressions to be popular, and not scientific. The Bible invariably speaks in popular language of phenomena in nature; to its writers the sun goes round the earth, and "the round world is made so fast that it cannot be moved." We have seen in previous papers that this is the explanation of the first chapter of Genesis, and it is only therefore what we should expect that the movements of the star should be described as it appeared to the travellers themselves.

Independent astronomers, as we saw last time, state that the star would have appeared to rest over Bethlehem as the travellers left Jerusalem; and in the astronomical tables of the Chinese, to whose general trustworthiness so high an authority as Humboldt bears witness, the appearance of an evanescent star was noted.

BETHLEHEM AND ALL THE COASTS THEREOF.

It is further objected that the mention of "all the coasts" of Bethlehem disproves the assertion that the massacre of the infants was a comparatively small affair, and little likely to be mentioned in the long tale of Herod's iniquities; but a glance at the history of "Bethlehem" in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible will show the insignificant size of the village at the time of our Lord, and the Greek which is translated "All the coasts" means nothing more than "the environs" or the immediate neighbourhood. It is noticeable that Dr. Edersheim, to whose intimate knowledge of Jewish history and Jewish customs we owe so much, computes the number of those massacred as "probably twenty at most."

WHO WAS ST. MATTHEW?

For the question "Who St. Matthew was" and "How we know he wrote the Gospel," we must refer our critic to the first series of these papers, in which the whole question was carefully examined; suffice it to say that no facts have arisen since then to shake our belief in the accuracy of the continuous tradition which ascribes the first Gospel to St. Matthew, or in the validity of the overwhelming external evidence there given to its authorship.

IS HE WEAK IN HIS FACTS?

It would obviously require a detailed examination of the whole Gospel fully to answer the sug-

gestion, but the single fact, given in illustration of the suggestion, as a "weak" fact, is the communication related (ii. 13-15), as addressed by God to Joseph, telling him in a dream "to take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt."

JOSEPH'S DREAM.

The belief in divine communication through dreams was universal among Jews; and the dreams of Abimelech, Laban, Pharaoh, the chief butler and the chief baker, and in New Testament days, Pilate's wife, show that it was common to other nations as well. Nor is there anything contrary to reason in it; if the Spirit of God can communicate with the spirit of man at all, there is no inherent difficulty in that communication being made in the watches of the night. The nature of dreaming is as much a mystery as ever, but this much is certain—the man is still alive, though in a state of partially suspended animation.

Whether *we* see a difficulty or not about revelation through dreams, it is certain that St. Matthew would not; the writers of the Bible shared the belief on all such matters with their contemporaries, and, as we have often seen before, inspiration does not make men into men of another time. St. Matthew embodied the story received among the early Christians, and the authority for it, as for the first two chapters of St. Luke, must in all probability have been the Virgin Mary herself, who in her honoured retirement at the

house of St. John, would be the natural source of information with regard to these early days.

We must now come to the more difficult question of

ST. MATTHEW'S USE OF PROPHECY.

The key to this is to be found in a reasonable view of inspiration, combined with a knowledge of Jewish ideas current at the time. Inspiration means "breathing into," and the fact that God "breathes into," a man for a special purpose and uses his work, does not make it less necessary for him to use his own faculties, nor does it gift him necessarily with supernatural knowledge above the men of his time. St. Luke was equally inspired with St. Matthew, but he describes in the first few verses of his Gospel the careful way he had "traced the facts from the very first;" the inspired man, as has been well said, was the *pen-man*, not the pen of the Holy Ghost.

That being the case, we should expect St. Matthew's use of prophecy, writing as he was to Jews, and being himself a Jew, to be intensely Jewish. "Those who have attentively followed," says Dr. Edersheim, "the course of Jewish thinking, and marked how the ancient Synagogue, and that rightly, read the Old Testament in its unity, as ever pointing to the Messiah as the fulfilment of Israel's history, will not wonder at St. Matthew's retrospective view."

Take in the first place—

“OUT OF EGYPT HAVE I CALLED MY SON.”

We turn to Hosea xi. 1, and at first sight it seems to have nothing to do with “The Messiah” at all; but when we examine Jewish literature, we find that Exodus iv. 22, on which the passage in Hosea is based, *was actually applied by the ancient synagogue to the Messiah* (Edersheim, vol. i, 214; ii. 716).

Such a discovery does more than explain the quotation; it is, so far as it goes, an undesigned coincidence that the account was written by a true Jew, living at the time, and was not a forgery of a later date.

So, again, with regard to

RACHEL WEEPING FOR HER CHILDREN.

(Matt. ii. 18; Jeremiah xxxi. 15).

It is not implied for a moment that the prophet foresaw the details of the massacre of the Innocents, but to a Jew it was always the question, not what did the prophet, but what did the *prophecy* mean? He ever saw in the past the prototype of the future, and recognised in events not only the principle, but the very features of that which was to come.

Rachel, who died and was buried in Ramah, is poetically pictured by Jeremiah as wailing over her children, the men of Benjamin, when the exiles to Babylon met in Ramah, and when those who would have encumbered the march were slaughtered; to St. Matthew’s mind, taught from

his earliest years to connect one event with another, this early event prefigured what was to come after.

Lastly, it is only an investigation of Jewish ideas which explains—

HE SHALL BE CALLED A NAZARENE (ii. 23).

Here an entirely gratuitous difficulty is created by someone who has written Judges xiii. 5 as a reference in the margin. This passage describes the announcement to Samson's mother that "he should be a *Nazarite*"—a very different thing—and has nothing whatever to do with the passage in St. Matthew.

It is to be noted that St. Matthew never says it does; he says "it was spoken *through the prophets*." Joseph and Mary had gone back to live at Nazareth, and henceforth Jesus would stand out before the Jews of His time as "The Nazarene." In the mind of a Palestinian, a peculiar significance would attach to the by-name of the Messiah. From the language of the prophets, the Jews derived no fewer than eight names by which the Messiah was to be called, and of these the most prominent was "The Branch" (see Jeremiah xxiii. 5; Zechariah iii. 18; Isaiah xi. 1). The Messiah when He came was to be Ben-Netzer, "The Son of the Branch," and this is the exact equivalent of the Greek word translated Nazarene. When St. Matthew comes in his story to the popular name by which Jesus was called, "Jesus of Nazareth" or "Jesus the Nazarene," he

cannot help ascribing to Divine Providence the fact that He should bear the very name which all Jews expected the Messiah to bear.

There is moreover a further fitness; we are all familiar with the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, with its prophecy of a suffering Messiah, but there are many other passages throughout the prophets which also speak of the coming Messiah as to be "despised and rejected" of men. Now it so happens that in our Lord's time a "Nazarene" was a term of contempt; "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" was the common thought of the time; the name of the Nazarene therefore, assumed by our Lord, marked Him to a Jew "as despised and rejected of men."

Whatever we may think of the value of these Jewish expectations, an unprejudiced mind must admit that it does not affect the value of St. Matthew's facts; he does not rest his facts on the prophecies, but merely illustrates them by the prophecies; as is well known, the word "that" in New Testament Greek is not the equivalent of our "in order that" so much as "so that." Even supposing for the sake of argument that he was mistaken in making so much of these facts as fulfilments of ancient prophecies, the facts remain as strong as ever, and it is on the facts we rest our faith.

PART III.

THE FIERCENESS OF THE
GOSPELS.

IT has been objected lately that the Gospels should be thrown overboard, as portraying a cruel and vindictive God as opposed to the kind and loving God which the human conscience demands. "The human conscience by itself," it is asserted, "tells us of a Father who loves each one of His children, while the Gospels tell of a God who condemns thousands to everlasting torture, not for sin or crime of any kind, but simply because they will not believe one, called Christ, to be the Son of God."

Now we have already explained (1st Series, Papers vii. ix.) the sense in which "He that believeth shall be condemned" (Mark xvi. 16, R.V.), and it would be foreign to this series on *historical* and scientific difficulties to enter into the vexed question of the meaning of "Æonian life" or "Æonian punishment;" but this we can say, that a greater historical blunder could not be made than the above assertion.

AN UNENLIGHTENED CONSCIENCE.

When we talk of conscience, we must draw a clear distinction between an enlightened and an

unenlightened conscience. To say that the human conscience left to itself speaks of a kind and loving Father, is to forget the fires of Moloch, the dark superstitions of native tribes, the widespread view of God as "the jealous one," all of which have been the creations of the human conscience left to itself. Nay, if we ourselves had been left simply for conscience to gather what it could from the teachings of nature, we might have found it difficult to decide whether the earthquake and the volcano were a truer revelation of God's character than the sunshine and the flowers.

ENLIGHTENED BY THE GOSPELS.

What then, historically, *has* educated the conscience of the world up to the point of demanding a loving Father? What has made us impatient, and rightly impatient, of any portraiture of God, except the highest possible? Simply *the Gospels themselves*; true or not true, genuine or not genuine, it is a simple matter of history that it is the character they portray which has educated the conscience of the world, and that the real reason we speak so confidently of "Our Father which is in Heaven" is because such was the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

It has sometimes been said that Christianity creates its own difficulties; this is certainly a case of its doing so, if the very records which have created this high standard are to be given up because inconsistent with it. Surely a less heroic but more reasonable conclusion must be that we have misinterpreted the passages in question if we

have made them conflict with the central tenor of the revelation; the central revelation is that God is Love, and the place where we have learnt it is "at the feet of Jesus." We have no right, therefore, to interpret any of His utterances in a sense inconsistent with this.

THE WARNINGS OF LOVE.

And when we look at the passages themselves, divesting our minds of the interpretations put upon them by commentators and preachers, do we not see in them the warnings of love? God forbid that we should minimize the awfulness of the warnings given, but do we see nothing in this life to justify the language used? Is there nothing in remorse to justify a comparison with the "fires of Gehenna" outside Jerusalem? Do we never see a self-will so stiffnecked as to justify the warning that if self-will continues self-will, there is no place for it in Heaven?

"When self-will ceases, Hell ceases," says St. Bernard; but how do we know that it will cease in every case? If God made it arbitrarily cease, He would break His own image in us, for part of His image is our freewill; in creating freewills, God has self-limited His own Omnipotence; to will against the good eternally is to be guilty of an "eternal sin" (Mark iii. 29), and eternal sin is its own punishment; it is the loss of God.

NECESSITATED BY THE DANGER.

Is there nothing in such a possibility to justify strong language? Dr. Pusey quotes with approval

Faber's sentence, "No one ever has been or ever can be lost by surprise or trapped in his ignorance; and as to those who may be lost, I confidently believe that our Heavenly Father threw His arms round each created spirit, and looked it full in the face with bright eyes of love, in the darkness of its mortal life, and that of its own deliberate will it would not have Him."

Even if only a few should be in danger of doing anything so awful, would the Saviour of the world be likely to lose a chance of saving them by warning them in time? Could any warnings be too strong to save from such a sin? And are we justified in saying it is too strong until we have done something approaching what He did to save men from it.

PART IV.

THE GENEALOGIES.

Descending to a much lower class of difficulties, we pass to the apparent contradictions between the genealogies in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke; many of the names are not the same; one is longer than the other; in St. Matthew's, one of his sets of fourteen names only has thirteen, and both being the genealogies of Joseph, who was *not* our Lord's father, fail to show that Jesus Christ was of the seed of David.

Let us take these difficulties one by one; there is no difficulty in the fact of the genealogies being put in; the Jews were and are most particular about their genealogies; they were very carefully kept in the early books of the Old Testament; it was the first thing Zerubbabel investigated on the return from the captivity, and the very fact that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem—the city of David—for the census, showed that even in those days all Jews were carefully tabulated under their distinct families.

TAKEN OUT OF THE PUBLIC RECORDS.

There is no doubt then that both these genealogies were taken out of the public records. Josephus at the beginning of his own life, leads off

with his genealogy, and says, "I have thus traced my genealogy as I have found it recorded in the public tables;" and there is no difficulty in the two forms of genealogy. The one form is "A begat B, and B begat C," &c., which is called the descending form; the ascending form is "which was the son of A, which was the son of B," &c. Instances of both are found in the Old Testament and other places.

BUT WHY ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

For the simple reason that they contain two quite different pieces of information. St. Matthew has inserted a genealogy which gives a list of the heirs to the throne of David. It traces the generation through the long line of Jewish kings, whereas St. Luke has inserted a genealogy, also of Joseph, through private persons.

That this is so, may be shown by a single instance: Jechonias is said (Matt. i. 12) to have begotten Salathiel, but we find from Jeremiah xxii. 30 that he was pronounced childless, and we find from St. Luke that Salathiel's real father was a man named Neri.

What then does St. Matthew mean by saying he begat him? Simply that he *was succeeded by him*; "the term son appears to have been used throughout the East in those days, as it still is, to denote connection generally either by descent or succession" (Layard's Nineveh and Babylon, p. 613). Thus Jehu is said on inscriptions to be "the son of Omri," whereas he was only one of the successors.

Wherever, therefore, the successor happens also to be the son in the direct line, the genealogies agree; where a nephew or a distant relation or a stranger succeeds, naturally they differ; thus Joseph himself is said to be the son of Jacob in St. Matthew, and the son of Heli in St. Luke; he was the literal son of Heli, and the heir after Jacob, who can only have had a daughter born to him.

This fact gives the probable cue to the next difficulty.

WHAT HAVE THE GENEALOGIES TO DO WITH MARY?

She is probably the daughter of Jacob, and first cousin therefore to Joseph. The genealogies, therefore, though given as Joseph's (for so they would have been given in the public records), really give us also the ancestors of Mary, and trace her descent and therefore the descent of her Son (according to the flesh) from David. Perhaps it was because she was an "heiress in her own right," though that privilege was not accompanied with earthly riches, that she took the long journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth. Even Evangelists must be allowed by their critics enough common sense not to spoil their own story, and as both state in their opening chapters that Joseph was not our Lord's father, they would scarcely have been simple enough to have inserted the genealogies as our Lord's, unless their readers had known that they really were so.

WHY SHOULD THERE BE THIRTEEN NAMES
INSTEAD OF FOURTEEN.

This requires a critical examination of the passage, and we find that where the passage has probably become corrupt is over Jechonias. It so happens that there were two kings, Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin, the latter of whom succeeded the former. They have got confused into the one name which etymologically is the same as both, viz. Jechonias. To make it plain we should have had another sentence, "And Jehoiakim begat (or was succeeded by) Jehoiachin," and we find corruption in the text of a very early date, and the clause "Jechonias begat Jechonias" is found in at least one of the best manuscripts. This gives us our fourteen, and though this rough sketch does not pretend in detail to answer every difficulty which has been or can be raised about the genealogies, it may at least remove the chief. Perhaps the most valuable part which comes out of the comparison is the frankness and sincerity of the writers, who felt so sure of their facts that they copied in two different genealogies without a word of comment.

PART V.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY has said with regard to miracles, "The mysteries of the Church are child's play compared with the mysteries of nature; virgin procreation and resurrection from apparent death are ordinary phenomena for the naturalist; I have not the slightest objection to offer *à priori* to all the propositions in the three Creeds.¹" Yet there is no doubt that to ordinary minds the miracles present one of the chief difficulties in accepting the New Testament. We have never seen a miracle; no one whom we know has; and there seems a certain plausibility in the statement that "Although they are not *à priori* impossible, yet no evidence we can get now can weigh for a moment against the experience of mankind before or since."

And of course the chief miracle in the New Testament is the Resurrection of Christ Himself; all others are nothing to this; so important did St. Paul consider it that he made Christianity depend for its life on its truth, and in their early sermons all the Apostles appeared to have preached little else but "Jesus and the Resurrection."

¹ Gore's Bampton Lectures, p. 247.

ORDINARY EVIDENCE.

Now every one knows by this time what are called the proofs of the Resurrection of Christ ; the steady, quiet witness of plain men, fitted by their very simplicity and want of imaginative power to be witnesses to a fact ; the slight variations in their accounts, so constantly seen in our own law courts when a number of eyewitnesses are relating something which all saw under different conditions ; the delightfully naive admissions that "some doubted" at first, an admission which no forger would have dared to insert ; the impossibility of explaining the origin of the Christian Church on any other hypothesis, except that the gloom and despondency of Good Friday was dissipated by the glory and hopefulness of something which happened three days afterwards ; the equal impossibility of explaining the existence of Sunday, instead of Friday, as the holy day of that Church, if nothing happened on that day more important than the death on the Friday ; the failure of all attempts to explain what happened to the body of our Lord, when it is clear that if the Jews had possession of it, they could have shown it as a triumphant disproof of the Apostle's story, and if the disciples had it, they could not (without being impostors, which no critic of standing has ever called them) have preached round the world that He had risen from the dead.

5th March
XXV
17

REBUTTING EVIDENCE.

And when we ask for the rebutting evidence, it is not too much to say that there is none ; there

have been many rebutting theories, but they as a rule have destroyed one another; the swoon theory is laughed at now in the place of its birth; and the vision theory falls to pieces in light of the evidence. Could a vision "eat and drink?" Could a vision convince Thomas of its substantial reality? Could a vision be mistaken for a reality by 500 people in broad daylight on a mountain?

But although this is all true, and although therefore by every principle of scientific investigation we ought to enlarge our theory to take in an ascertained fact, instead of cutting down our facts to suit our theory, yet it remains true that there are some who would like to believe the Resurrection, and feel they ought to believe, but yet who cannot.

THE ROOT DIFFICULTY.

Can we then lay our finger on the root difficulty the fundamental mistake under which they are labouring, and under which many of us possibly have fallen in the past?

It has been well pointed out in an able paper lately:¹ We slip into the idea that matter and spirit are opposed to one another; "We think of matter as little hard atoms, and forces as attractions and repulsions resident in these atoms; but this is a hypothesis merely, and some of the fullest and profoundest physical philosophers regard it as perhaps an entirely misleading temporary way of regarding

¹ "Evolution as a Reply to Materialism, Pessimism, and Agnosticism," by the Ven. J. M. WILSON. Published by S.P.C.K., Northumberland Avenue, W.C.

matter. They make not the atom the origin and centre of force, but force the origin; and regard the atom not as solid matter, but as an immaterial centre of force. But force is will, and we have no other idea of force derived from our own sensation except that of will. Hence if continuity should be established between the cosmical dust and the animal, it will identify the force of the one with the force of the other, and explain them both as *will*."

In other words, spirit is more important than matter; a telegram is received; there are some words on a piece of paper, but my eye falls on them, and the message has reached *me*, not my senses, not my body, not my sight, but something behind them—*myself*, the self-conscious being who can will and act and work through the senses and control them.

WHAT FOLLOWS?

It becomes at once reasonable that there should also be such a self-conscious Being at the centre of the Universe; I cannot explain the Universe without some Final Cause, and the Final Cause of intelligence cannot be less than intelligent.

There is then a "Father of Spirits," to whom I and all other spirits owe their origin. If spirit is the great reality behind the world of sense, then He is the great Reality behind the world of Spirit. Would He be likely to wish to communicate with the spirits He had created? Would the Father wish to communicate with His children? Yes! He would be likely; it would be most unlikely

that He would allow the earth and His children on it to spin through space without a word.

How must He communicate? He must send His Word; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
—John i. 1.

JESUS CHRIST AS THE WORD OF GOD.

This is just what Christianity teaches that He did; Jesus Christ is put before us as the Word of God. And could we imagine a revelation more worthy of God? If we had sat down to think out how the Father of Spirits could most worthily have revealed His character and purpose to us, could we have thought out a more worthy way? For Him to have come as an earthly king or a great general would obviously have appealed far less to the poor; and there would have been something tawdry in earthly grandeur as clothing the Word of God. He is perfectly brave, perfectly true, perfectly holy to the death.

COULD HE REMAIN DEAD?

And so we come round again to the Resurrection. *Acts 9:27* But now it has become natural; God cannot "suffer His Holy One to see corruption." The miracle, if there was one, was that He should be able to die. The Power which originated life, the Will which (by whatever process of evolution) produced the Universe, the Force eternally working every day to keep life alive, could have no difficulty in restoring it; if force is the central power, and atoms an im-

material centre of force, what was seen in the case of Jesus Christ is but a prelude to what will be seen in millions of cases in the future, "When He shall change the body of our humiliation until it be like unto His glorious body, according to the mighty working by which He shall subdue all things to Himself."

Phil. 2

PHILOSOPHY, SCIENCE, AND HISTORY AGREE.

The historical evidence then, with which this paper began, tells no unreasonable story; so far from contradicting science, it is consistent with the latest voice of science, which seems to ask again the question of St. Paul to Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" And above all, it is philosophical, for it alone meets the deepest needs and longings of human nature; it gives humanity the one Hope it longs for in a dying world. No other voice can say, except the Voice of the Risen Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden; and I will give you rest."

Act xxv 8

*St. Mark
X-28.*

PART VI.

ST. PAUL IN ASIA MINOR.

EVERYTHING, it is said, comes to the man who waits, and it is certainly true that the man who has waited under perhaps flouts and jeers for the verification of the historical accuracy of the Acts of the Apostles, has not waited in vain. In the pages of Professor Ramsay's new book, giving the results of his discoveries in Asia Minor, it is not too much to say that St. Paul lives and moves again as the man Paul, before our very eyes. He gets fever like a modern traveller, he has difficulties in getting over mountains in winter, he has to go round by roads, and we see the roads before us; he gets involved in trade disputes, and finds, like many a Christian since, his gospel most effectually barred by vested interests. But before we enter into these things,

WHO IS PROFESSOR RAMSAY?

And why do we pay so much attention to what he says? The first reason is that he has been a professor of Classical Archæology, and knows therefore what he is talking about; secondly, he has spent some years in Asia Minor, and thirdly, starting on his investigations with a prejudice against the Acts of the Apostles as an historical

document, he has been driven by his discoveries to an exactly opposite conclusion; his object is to give a faithful picture of the early Roman empire, and he finds it impossible to do so without at every step coming across—and this gives him the title of his book—"The Church in the Roman Empire."

WHAT HE SAYS.

"For years with much interest and zeal but little knowledge, I followed the (German) critics and accepted their results. In recent years, as I came to understand Roman History better, I have realized that in the case of almost all the books of the New Testament, it is as gross an outrage on criticism to hold them for second century forgeries as it would be to class the works of Horace and Virgil as forgeries of the time of Nero" (p. 8).

Again, "I now feel even more confident than before that Acts xiii.-xxi. is an authority of the highest character for the historian of Asia Minor. Formerly I looked upon it with much suspicion, and refrained entirely in my Historical Geography from founding an argument on it. Now I have learned that those points which aroused suspicion were perfectly true to the first century, but were misjudged by me, because I contemplated them under the influence of prepossessions derived from the facts of the second century" (p. 168).

What, then, are some of the interesting facts which have come to light? and we cannot do more in a short paper than pick a few plums out of a fascinating book of 500 pages.

The first and most interesting question to the Professor, evidently is—

WHO WERE THE GALATIANS?

Everybody knows that St. Paul went a tour in the south of Asia Minor to places like Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, and that he later on wrote a letter "to the Galatians," and most of us have been brought up to think that these were quite different people living in the north about whom nothing practically is said in the Acts of the Apostles.

This "north Galatia" theory the Professor attacks in a thoroughly refreshing way, and shows that during the first century, all that portion of Asia Minor which includes Derbe, Lystra, etc., was known as Galatia, that St. Paul was therefore writing to his old friends whom he had visited two or three times, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and—most valuable point of all—as it was only in the first century that this district was called Galatia, both the record and the letter must belong to the middle of that century.

"Gentlemen of the Galatian Province" is just what they would have liked to have been called, and that is what St. Paul calls them.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERIES.

Then we come to many minute points of geographical accuracy. Of these we select one, which illustrates the weakness of the case against the Acts of the Apostles as a first century production. The fact of Iconium being dis-

tinguished from Lycaonia (xiv. 6) was thought to be historically inaccurate, as it is generally placed in Lycaonia by later writers, but a native of Iconium in 163 A.D., made this statement: "My earthly parents are dead, I have come hither, torn away from Iconium of Phrygia."

Thus, "but for the answer given in a Roman trial by a native of Iconium in 163 A.D., we should be unable to reply to the argument that the phrase in the Acts is inaccurate; and but for the accident that the present writer persevered in minutely examining a hillock in the plain which had previously been passed by other travellers unnoticed, we should be unable to answer the presumption that the term 'royal road,' as applied to a Roman imperial road, indicated rather a second than a first century date" (p. 40).

But the ordinary reader will turn from these minute points, interesting as they are when one thinks how much is involved in them, and ask what sort of people first believed in Christianity, what effect did it have on the social questions of Asia Minor, what had the artisans to say to it? And it is interesting to find out that

CHRISTIANITY SPREAD AT FIRST AMONG THE EDUCATED.

This will be rather a surprise to those who contend that Christianity is believed only by the ignorant and uneducated and vanishes before the "light of knowledge." On the contrary, "it spread at first among the educated more rapidly than

among the uneducated ; nowhere had it a stronger hold than in the household and court of the emperors. Where Roman organisations and Greek thought have gone, there Paul by preference goes" (p. 57).

It must not then surprise us if the educated portion of a country is the most Christian, and if it takes some little time for an enlightened Christianity to filter down to the less educated through the obstacles of misunderstanding and prejudice. Such was the course of Christianity at first, and such probably its course always. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." But the educated middle-class were the strength of the early Church.

Equally interesting is the evidence of the Acts as to the

POSITION OF WOMEN IN ASIA MINOR.

Everyone must have noticed the prominent part that women play in different scenes recorded in the Acts, not only women converts, such as Lydia, but "the devout and honourable women who were stirred up to persecution against Paul and Barnabas" (Acts xiii. 50).

Now in some parts of the world this would have looked like an anachronism, but not in Asia Minor. "The honours and influence which belonged to women in the cities of Asia Minor form one of the most remarkable features in the history of the country. Under the Roman Empire we find women magistrates, presidents at games, and loaded with

honours. The custom of the country influenced even the Jews, who at least in one case appointed a woman at Smyrna to the position of chief of the Synagogue."

But perhaps the most interesting picture of all is

THE SILVER "RING" AT EPHEBUS,

which St. Paul disturbed by his effective preaching. The account given in the Acts (according to Professor Ramsay), is evidently "the work of an eye-witness." The title given to the magistrates of "Asiarchs," he looks upon from a historian's point of view, as a valuable piece of evidence, seeing that in other places the Acts is minutely accurate in the names of officers, whether local or imperial. The havoc which St. Paul made in the sale of "silver shrines for Diana," and the outcry of Demetrius directly his "vested interests" were touched, is paralleled by a later complaint in Asia Minor on the part of "those who sold fodder" for the animals led to the sacrifice.

The trade of making these silver shrines for Artemis (or Diana) is well known to have been one of the great trades at Ephesus, and the great anxiety of Demetrius in consequence for "the honour of the great goddess Diana," is very true to human nature. The name "Demetrius" occurs often on inscriptions, and the whole incident takes us into the heart of artisan life in Ephesus.


THE SOCIAL INFLUENCE OF EARLY
CHRISTIANITY.

We have probably yet to realise the social effect of Christianity. It was a "social revolution," and nothing less. "When we want to know about the life of working men of those days, I get little for my purpose," says the Professor, "among the pagan writers; I must go to the Christian writers, whom I find full of *social enthusiasm*. . . . The Church was a party of reform, and of opposition to the government policy" (p. 177). "When we find any person who sets himself to do something with energy for the improvement of society, he is either an Emperor or a Christian" (p. 185)

The later Church, when it became too prosperous, may have forgotten this; but it has now re-found its early ideals, and must care neither for "vested interests" nor party cries, on one side or the other, in preaching and carrying into practice its gospel of righteousness, justice, and love.

PART VII.

ALLEGED INCONSISTENCIES.

T the request of a kind and candid critic, who unfortunately takes a very different view of the Christian revelation to that which we do ourselves, we have read through recently one or two books, one of them consisting of 450 closely printed pages, containing what are honestly meant to be damaging criticisms of the New Testament. Much has been already dealt with in these papers; other points are too subtle to be usefully discussed in papers for working men, and the whole shows an almost complete misunderstanding of what the Catholic faith is on points like the Incarnation and Inspiration. We take almost at random a single chapter, and we find it brought forward as inconsistent with the historical belief in the Divinity of Christ that

JESUS INCREASED IN WISDOM AND STATURE
(Luke ii. 52),

but surely anyone familiar with the Christian faith must know that it is equally an integral part of that faith to believe that Jesus Christ was "perfect man;" anyone with any knowledge of Church History must know that there have been more

so-called "heresies," denying His manhood, than denying His Godhead, and that so far from the Christian Church being disconcerted by this and kindred verses, it has always held to them as sheet-anchors in defending the perfect manhood of its Head.

If He was truly man, He must have "increased in wisdom and stature" like any other man, and the difficulty becomes a metaphysical—not an historical one. If a man continues to believe, in spite of the probability that a loving God would be likely to wish to draw close to His children, in spite of the preparation in history and by prophecy for the event, in spite of Christ's character, combined with His statements about Himself, in spite of His miracles and His Resurrection, that it is *impossible* for the same Being to be "God and Man," then we pass at once out of the sphere of history, of evidence, and have entered the somewhat dangerous atmosphere of *à priori* assertions as to what is or is not possible with God.

Precisely the same criticism applies to the next two so-called inconsistencies.

"OF THAT DAY OR THAT HOUR KNOWETH NO MAN—NEITHER THE SON" (Mark xiii. 32).

It is quite possible, as has been forcibly suggested to us lately, that we have not fully appreciated the depth of the condescension of the Son of God, that He "emptied Himself of His glory" more completely than we have up to now dared to admit, but the fact of it in some form and to some

degree has never been denied by the Christian Church. "He was made man" has been repeated in all the earliest Creeds, and is only a repetition of St. Paul's assertion made within 25 years of His death, that "God sent forth His Son, *made of a woman*, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 4).

Let us listen patiently to all criticisms of the Christian Faith, but let them be directed against what that faith has always historically been, and not what it has never been.

So again—

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN
ME?"

Christians cherish this last utterance on the Cross as one of their most precious possessions. They feel that they have in their trouble, and even in their doubt, One to invoke, who knows what darkness means. When everything is dark around them, and the clouds roll across the sky, and the Father's face seems hidden, they believe that there is One who has known the anguish of it, and who can therefore sympathize and help. Of the cry itself, the poet has said:—

"It went up from the Holy's lips, amid His lost creation,
That of the lost no son should use these words of desolation."

And when a critic goes on to assert that the cry is equivalent to "Myself, Myself, why hast Thou forsaken Me," we charitably suppose that he has never heard of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which teaches, and has always taught, that "there

is one Person of the Father, and another of the Son," and that therefore the Son can without the slightest inconsistency be represented as speaking to the Father.

No one wishes to deny that the Christian Faith is a great and awe-inspiring faith, touching on mysteries we only partially comprehend; it is the very thing St. Paul meant, when he said emphatically, "We know in part;" "We see as in a metal mirror, darkly," but it seems a little childish to set up a stuffed figure of what is supposed to be the Christian faith, and fire a perfect cannonade at it, which necessarily leaves the faith itself entirely untouched.

An extension of the same principle meets the difficulty raised with regard to the saying of Jesus Christ about Judas Iscariot:

"GOOD WERE IT FOR THAT MAN IF HE HAD NEVER BEEN BORN" (Mark xiv. 21).

■ The Creator is surely responsible for the existence of all His creatures, and such a speech is unbecoming on the lips of the Creator," it is said.¹

We are at once launched again into the whole question of freewill and necessity, and are carried back to the old difficulty we considered long ago, "Why was Adam allowed to fall," as well as forward to the modern difficulty, "Why is a modern murderer allowed to be born?"

That we are free agents on the whole, though subject to the laws of heredity and association, is

¹ See Old Testament Difficulties (S.P.C.K.).

admitted by most reasonable men, certainly by working men, who definitely prefer to be *men* with all its disadvantages to being clocks, bound to go right or wrong. That being the case, we all have our choice and our chance; our chance is according to our choice; the voice of conscience, the influence of good friends, public opinion, so far as it is enlightened, are on the side of choosing the good; on the other hand, we know perfectly well that we might, any of us, if we let ourselves go, do the most devilish things, and it might be said of us, with our honour gone, our character debased, with our best friend betrayed, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born."


Turn, then, to Judas; he was a man like ourselves; he had his choice and his chance; his chance was a great one, to be a companion and an Apostle of the Son of God; he had a very loving influence on the side of a right choice; no one can read the Gospels attentively without seeing that Jesus up to the last was appealing to the better feelings of Judas; the trust He reposed in him as "bursar" of the company, the sop which He gave him at the supper table, and the hint He gave him as he went out that He knew what was in his heart, and even at the last moment the appeal, "*Friend*, wherefore art thou come," indicate to us, what we might have known, even without them, that Jesus was trying to save Judas from himself, to fan the last little flickering flame of honour, love and gratitude; but, when all was in vain, and the act of treachery had been accomplished, and he had—with all that it means of

honour trampled, conscience stifled, and innocence murdered—"betrayed the Son of Man," what wonder that it could be said of him, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born,"—he certainly thought so himself, for he went and hanged himself.

But why did not Christ as God *force* him to stop in time? Does God as a matter of fact *force* us? If any man goes on in his wickedness, and thinks God is going to come into his life and *force* him to be good, the sooner he undeceives himself the better; God *forces* no one; the moment He forces anyone, He breaks their freewill, and in breaking their freewill, He breaks His own image in them.

PART VIII.

ALLEGED MISTAKES.

REAT attempts have been made during the last fifty years to shake the credit of the Gospel narrative by finding points where it may be shown to differ from other histories of the time, or to contravene customs known from other sources to exist. In nearly every case the attempt has hopelessly broken down; as has already been shown in detail with regard to the Gospel of St. John¹ and the Acts of the Apostles,² the more we learn of Jewish and Roman customs, and the more insight we get into the actual disputes, interests, and expectations of the first century, the more impossible does it become that the Gospel narrative can have been composed at any other time.

But, as might be expected in dealing with minute historical details—and the writers of the books of the Bible are never afraid, like forgers are, of names, and dates, and places—we do come sometimes to points which are obscure. Thus, much has been made of

THE CENSUS OF QUIRINIUS.

It is said in Luke ii. 2, that the decree for the

¹ New Testament Difficulties (First Series).

² Part V.

taxing, in accordance with which Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, "was first made when Cyrenius (Quirinius) was governor of Syria," which would make his governorship in the year B.C. 4; but we know from Josephus that Cyrenius was governor of Syria A.D. 6, that is, ten years afterwards, and that "the days of the taxing," alluded to in Acts v. 37, took place during his governorship then.

Here, then, is a plausible case for an historical mistake; "the writer has made a mistake of ten years," and has forgotten, in his second treatise (The Acts), that he had placed "the taxing" in his Gospel ten years earlier. It would have been unlikely of course that a man who at any rate evidently had brains should thus openly contradict himself; but still, if we had no more information, we should have been obliged to admit that there was a divergency which could not be explained.

It has, however, been proved almost to demonstration by Mommsen, and especially by Zumpt, neither of whom will be suspected of partiality, that Quirinius (or Cyrenius) was *twice* governor of Syria (cf. Tacitus, Annal. iii. 48), once in B.C. 4, and once in A.D. 6. His experience in the first census may account for his appointment to superintend the second; and when we turn to Luke ii. 2 again, and translate it properly, we find that, with his usual care, the writer is trying to tell us this. "This," he says, "was the *first* (census) made under the governorship of Cyrenius;" having in his mind, and knowing that his readers would have in their minds, the *second*, which he alludes to in the Acts of the Apostles.

A difficulty has also been made as to

WHY MARY WENT TO BETHLEHEM?

but all women over twelve years of age were subject in the Roman Empire to a head tax, as well as men over fourteen till the age of sixty-five. In Mary's case there is further reason to suppose, as we have seen in a previous article, that she was "heiress in her own right."

A far more plausible difficulty is made out of the allusion to

ZACHARIAS THE SON OF BARACHIAS

(Matt. xxiii. 35),

"whom," Jesus is reported to have said, "ye slew between the temple and the altar."

Now, it so happens, that the only Zachariah who is stated in the Bible to be the son of Barachiah, was the prophet whose writings are preserved in the Old Testament; but, as far as we know, he was not slain at all, and certainly there is no mention of his being slain "between the temple and the altar;" whereas the Zechariah, mentioned in II Chron. xxiv. 20, as being murdered in this way, was the "son of Jehoiada." That this Zechariah is meant there can be no doubt, because so well-known was this murder that the Jews had a legend that "his blood did not dry up for two centuries and a half, but still bubbled on the pavement, when Nebuzar-adan entered the temple and at last avenged it."

How, then, are we to account for his being called the "son of Barachias." He is not so called in

Luke xi. 51, where his name Zechariah alone is given. It may of course be due to an error of a copyist, who, as in other cases, may have added a note, meant to be of explanation, at the side, which has crept into the text; but it is quite probably an error of memory on the part of St. Matthew. It is only a false and a foolish idea of inspiration which precludes such mistakes on the part of inspired historians; they are the pen *men*, not the pens of the Holy Ghost, and are liable to errors of memory or misquotations like any other man.

Our opponents are always trying to put us on the horns of a dilemma, between literal inspiration of every word and letter of Scripture, or none at all; but "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." The Christian Church has never held, as a Church, such a theory of inspiration, whatever a few members of it may have done, and sees no difficulty whatever in believing a man to be "breathed into" by God for a special purpose, and yet at the same time to make a verbal mistake.

There is only one more alleged mistake we have space to discuss in this paper, and that is the assertion that

THE TRIAL SCENE IS UNHISTORICAL.

"An American barrister" is reported to have said, "That it is contrary to all Roman law and Jewish customs."

Even before we investigate this assertion, it strikes

us as a little odd that, if the account is so entirely contrary to Roman law and Jewish customs, the Professor of Roman Law at Cambridge, and the best expert in Jewish customs—Dr. Edersheim—should both be convinced and devoted Christians.

ROMAN LAW AND CUSTOMS.

When, however, we look into the matter we find that the exact contrary is the case; the proceedings of Pilate in our Lord's trial supply many interesting illustrations of the accuracy of the Evangelists from the accordance of their narrative with the known customs of the time. Thus Pilate, being only a procurator, had no quæstor to conduct the trial, and therefore examined the prisoner himself. Again: in early times Roman magistrates had not been allowed to take their wives with them into the provinces; but this prohibition had fallen into neglect, and latterly a proposal, made by Cæcina to enforce it, had been rejected (Tacitus, *Annal.* iii. 33, 34). The word used for "referring" our Lord to Herod's jurisdiction is the equivalent of the exact technical word used in Roman law. The "tessellated pavement" (called in the Hebrew Gabbatha), was so necessary to the forms of justice, as well as the portable tribunal, that Julius Cæsar carried one about with him on his expeditions (Suet. *Jul.* c. 46). The power of life and death was taken from the Jews when Judæa became a province (Josephus *Ant.* xx. 9, sect. 1). Scourging before execution was a well-known Roman practice,

and crucifixion itself was the commonest form of execution, especially for slaves and criminals.¹

OUTSIDE EVIDENCE.

Further: as to the fact of the case, we are told by Tacitus (*Annal.* xv. 44), "Christ, in the reign of Tiberius, had been executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate;" and we learn from Josephus (*Antiq.* xviii.), how embroiled Pilate already was with the Jews by many acts of high-handed dealing, and can therefore understand his extreme anxiety not to be reported to Cæsar as "not Cæsar's friend." It is interesting also to hear from Josephus that the political disaster he so dreaded came upon him after all.

With regard to the inconsistency of the trial scene with

JEWISH LAW AND CUSTOMS

there is still less case. According to the Jerusalem Gemara, the power of inflicting capital punishment was taken away from the Sanhedrim forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem. With this agrees the answer of the Jews to Pilate (*John* xix. 31), "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Beyond the arrest, trial, and condemnation of one convicted of violating the ecclesiastical law, the jurisdiction of the Jewish court at the time could not be extended; the confirmation and execution of the sentence in capital cases belonged to the Roman procurator. The stoning of Stephen

¹ See Dictionary of the Bible. Article "Pontius Pilate."

(Acts vii. 56) is only an apparent exception, for it was either a tumultuous procedure, or, if done by order of the Sanhedrim, an illegal assumption of power, as Josephus (Ant. xx. 9, sect. 1) expressly declares the execution of the Apostle James, during the absence of the procurator, to have been.¹

The account, therefore, of the trial scene is in exact accord with what we know from other sources of both Roman and Jewish customs.

¹ See Dictionary of the Bible. Article "Sanhedrim."

PART IX.

HERE comes a time in any controversy when it becomes waste of time to go on meeting difficulties in detail. It is the old story of cutting off the heads of the hydra; there is some root difficulty lower down from which the others spring; when once a man has made up his mind that the New Testament cannot be true, or—for this is a different thing—that he does not want it to be true, it is not very much good arguing with him. Take for instance a few

SPECIMENS OF CRITICISMS

from a book which lies in front of us, but which we have no particular desire to advertise. We just take them as they come, without arranging them. There are slight variations in the inscriptions on the Cross, therefore the story is untrue; there are slight variations in the story of the Resurrection, therefore there was no Resurrection; twelve baskets were collected after the feeding of the 5,000, therefore the disciples must have had larger supplies than they stated; there is a story in the Talmud, resembling the healing of the Centurion's servant, therefore the latter is a fiction; the Transfiguration is invented to put Jesus on a level with Moses and Elias; Jairus' daughter was only "sleep-

ing," not dead, did not Jesus say so? the raising of Lazarus is not narrated by the Synoptists, and therefore it did not happen; the doing of miracles is made contingent upon faith, and faith is mere credulity; the charges as to silence with regard to many who were healed are suspicious; Jesus always refuses to work a public miracle or sign, this again is suspicious; in the account of St. Paul's conversion, it is said in one place (Acts ix. 7) that his companions heard a voice; and in another (Acts xxii. 9) that they did not; the character of Christ is marred by pride and passion, though the "pleasing features predominate."

ANSWERS EASY, BUT PROFITLESS.

Now of course to answer these criticisms is an easy task, and it would have been possible to fill paper after paper with answers and explanations in detail, but the question is this: is it worth while to argue with anyone who from some inherent defect in his vision, or wilful distortion of his moral sense, only thinks that on the whole "the pleasing features predominate" in the character of Christ? Does it not to a Christian give almost a sense of disloyalty even to discuss such a criticism on a character which the verdict of the whole civilized world has pronounced faultlessly perfect? Then again the old Greek idiom we learned as schoolboys, about the Greek word for "hearing" taking the genitive when it means "hear and understand," and accusative when it means hearing the sound only, of course explains the use of the apparent contradiction be-

tween Acts ix. 7, and xxii. 9. St. Paul's companions heard the sound but did not understand the meaning of it as St. Paul did himself; St. Luke, as usual, is even delicately accurate in his use of words.

FURTHER ANSWERS.

Again, our Lord's use of signs, never to force belief or cause wonder, but always to stimulate faith in hearts already prepared; His fear of an attempt to make Him king before "His hour was come," explain at once the charges as to silence, and the necessity of the inward disposition called faith; no one can read the story of Jairus' daughter without seeing that she is represented as dead, and was only spoken of as "sleeping," to prepare the parents' minds for what was about to happen; the twelve basketfuls taken up was a proof of the miracle which had been worked, and it is merely begging the question to quote them as evidence that more food had been used; while as to the inscription on the Cross, and the slight discrepancies in the story of the Resurrection, allowed as they were to remain in the sacred documents of the Church, show at once the extreme honesty of the early Christians, and also, that they felt, what every jury feels in our law courts, that the slight variations in the accounts of eye-witnesses who agree in the main essentials, is the best evidence that the story is not a "got up thing." Some of us have seen the despair of a leading counsel when a witness on his side glibly runs off a story, which it is only too obvious has been learnt by rote.

THE MAIN QUESTION.

The chief reason, however, which seems to make it scarcely worth while to discuss any more, at any rate for a time, New Testament Difficulties, is that the main question is entirely evaded through them all. The main question is the question which we Christians have ourselves to ask of those who dispute our facts (and it is one to which we have received no answer yet after eighteen centuries), what is *your* explanation of the rise, rapid spread and success of the Christian society, especially in its early years?

As is well known, the historian, Gibbon, was too honest to evade the question, and with his great ability and wide knowledge was likely to give the best answer that any unbeliever would give, but how weak and shallow is even his explanation? He names first—

THE ENTHUSIASM OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS.

But what gave them enthusiasm? Is it likely that the sight of their dead Leader on the Cross, with all their hopes blasted, and worst of all, His promises unfulfilled, would have made them very enthusiastic? As a matter of fact we have a picture of what they were on the days after Good Friday, in the two disciples going back to their country home, broken-hearted and dispirited; "we thought it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," they said sadly to one another; there was little enthusiasm there to start a Church.

S. L. L. L.
XXIV. 21.

What, then, sent them singing round the world?

What filled them, in the midst of persecution and contempt, with indomitable hope? What made them choose Sunday as their sacred day and not Friday? There is no explanation but that something happened on that day, which reversed all their gloom, more than fulfilled their wildest expectations, and filled them with an enthusiasm which even a sceptical historian is bound to note.

Then, again,

THEIR BELIEF IN MIRACLES

is stated as another cause; but why did they believe in miracles? That is the question. People do not readily believe in miracles; or, if it be asserted that they did in the days of old, then what becomes of their belief in them being a *cause* of the success of the Christian Church? A belief which everyone shares would be a special cause of nothing.

But, as a matter of fact, the early Christians were like other people: they wanted evidence for believing in miracles; why did they then, as everyone admits, so firmly believe not only in the miracles of Christ, but also in miracles happening in their own community? ¹

Our explanation is a simple one: they *had* evidence, they saw them. St. Paul alludes to gifts of healing, and the working of miracles in a kind of incidental way, as if they were ordinary occurrences, and he does this in those of his epistles which are universally accepted as genuine; reject however all this, and you have no explanation to offer of the fact which the historian notes.

¹ See St. Paul's Epistles *passim*, especially 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Lastly, what are we to say of

THEIR ORGANISATION

as a cause of their success. It was no doubt a help to the Church; it was its organisation which carried it through the persecutions of Rome, and still more, the invasion of the Goths. It was the breakwater on which the waves of persecution and invasion broke and spent their force; but what produced it?

Weak, feeble, dispirited "items" do not organise themselves; ignorant fishermen and simple-minded peasants are not as a rule great statesmen; the thing is a miracle, as it appears to the outsider, but a miracle of which a believer in Pentecost, and in the Power and Work of the Spirit of Order, knows the explanation.

These, then, are mere secondary causes, and they point back to the one final cause as the only adequate one for the effects which took place, and that is, the historical truth of the revelation recorded in the New Testament.

OTHER RELIGIONS.

We are not to be frightened by the "bogey" of "other religions," we know too much about them; we gratefully recognise the good in all of them, and ascribe the good to the working of the one Spirit of Good; but anyone who studies the last book on Buddhism, by Dr. Copleston, will perceive that a system of philosophy and morality, with no belief in God, is not likely to be the religion of the future;

Mahometanism was propagated mainly by the sword, and its progress cannot therefore be compared with the progress of the Cross ; like all forms of religion, it owes what permanent success it has to the truth it contains, and that truth is Christian truth ; while the old religions connected with the names of Confucius and Zoroaster, having served their time as preliminary rays of light before the dawn, will be absorbed and transfused into the full revelation that has come.

CONCLUSION.

We have seen, then, in these papers, the irrefragable ground on which the Christian Revelation rests ; we have tested the sacred documents and find that they come unscathed through any test ; we have considered the difficulties which have been raised from the point of view of morality, science, or history, and have found that most of them arise from ignorance and misunderstanding, and that those which do exist are only what we should expect with our limited knowledge and limited powers ; we have endeavoured to be fair to our opponents, but at the same time outspoken when criticism appeared to become merely captious and carping, and we can only assure them, in conclusion, that our only aim has been to commend to all the belief which, according to the New Testament, is the one hope of the living, and the one comfort of the dying—that God has really sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">'Clerical Incomes.''Is Death an end of me?''Matthew Arnold.''Dean Church and his teaching.''Has man a Soul?''Jerusalem and Galilee in 1890.''Why do I believe in God?''Why am I a Christian?''Why do I believe in Miracles?''Why do I pray?''Why am I a Churchman?''Why do I believe the Bible?''The immortality of the Soul.''Christian Asceticism.''St. Patrick.''The Catacombs of Rome.''Christianity—an experimental Religion.''The Revised Version of the Bible.''John Wesley at Oxford.''Revelation.''Is Immortality probable?''Marcus Aurelius and Julian the Apostate.''The dignity of man.''Christian Evidences.''The new Reading Union.''Monks.''Ancient ideas of Creation.' | <ul style="list-style-type: none">'Christian Life in the early Church.''The return of the Jews to Palestine.''Some effects of Christianity.''Bishop Patteson.''Self-government the Crown of Manhood.''How best to help the Poor.''Bishop Rawle of Trinidad.''Christianity in the Australian Bush.''A tour in India.''The English Prayer Book and the English Nation.''Faith and Progress.''Is Christianity sensible?''Light.''St. Augustine and his times.''What a piece of work is man!''A well-spent life.''Saintliness and Insight.''Pessimistic Difficulties.''What is Life?''Church Worship.''The Education of Conscience.''Theosophy.''Inspiration.''Some Australian problems.''Address to close the year.' |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Is there a God?' 'Can man know God?' 'What has God done for me?' 'What does belief in God require me to do?' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Old Testament Difficulties.' 'More about the Old Testament.' 'New Testament Morality.' 'New Testament Difficulties.' |
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